

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Dick Gaughan ****

The day before The Chicago Sun-Times publishes an article condemning the Edinburgh Festival for playing host to a collection of events where "relentless leftism goes almost entirely un rebutted", in a "modern Scotland that is deep-dyed in socialism," Dick Gaughan played his annual Fringe gig at the Acoustic Music Centre at St. Bride's. If she had come along, the Sun-Times' reporter would have been apoplectic.

A proud Leither (he graciously provided the "Edinburgh" picture accompanying this article), Gaughan plays to a house packed by an audience that stretched around the block half an hour before the show was due to start. Described by John Peel as having "one of the five or six great voices of our time," and the creator of a folk album that was Melody Maker's album of the year in 1981 before being voted album of the decade by Folk Roots' readers and critics, Gaughan takes the stage to a warm ovation. Opening with a stirring rendition of Si Kahn's "What You Do With What You've Got", he sings the question, "What use is the finest voice, if you've nothing good to say?"

At 65 – he's been told he's no longer "an angry young man," but a "bad-tempered old bastard" – Gaughan's voice is as powerful as ever, and his guitar playing is not only strong, but nimble and nuanced. He uses these tools to express the sort of generous spirit and warm humanity that has characterised the shows I have seen during the 2013 Festivals. Support for Scottish independence is balanced by a plea in "Both Sides The Tweed" that "friendship and honour unite and flourish on both sides the Tweed."

After weaving stories of marine chronometers and playing festivals in the States into a 90-minute set, Gaughan finishes with an encore medley of Johnny Cash's "Apache Tears" and his

cover of Michael Martin's "Geronimo's Cadillac", accompanied on the chorus by a happy crowd. If this represents modern Scotland, so much the better.

Dick Gaughan played the Acoustic Music Centre at St. Bride's on 22 August.

Submitted by [Ricky Brown](#)

